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SUBJECT: CIVIL SOCIETY LEADER DISSES MDC FACTIONS AND
ZANU-PF

Classified By: Charge d, Affaires, a.i., Eric T. Schultz for reasons 1.5
b/d

Summary

¶1. (C) The chairman of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), Lovemore Madhuku, told poloffs March 13 that the opposition MDC was failing to exploit Zimbabweans' deepening economic frustration and that civil society would take the lead if necessary. Madhuku said ZANU-PF was doing a better job of reaching out to the grassroots but had its own problems, primarily over the succession issue, with Emmerson Mnangagwa,s faction playing for time and hoping to undermine Joyce Mujuru before open presidential elections, probably in ¶2010. Madhuku added that civil society had been pleased with the March 8 IMF vote, which had underscored the regime,s isolation. He also said he planned to remain at NCA,s helm despite the organization,s term limits. End Summary.

Grassroots Appeals

¶2. (C) Madhuku said Zimbabweans were looking for firm leadership on basic issues such as food, education, and youth unemployment. The NCA was trying to convince the MDC to confront the regime on these basic issues. To that end, the NCA and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) were organizing a civil society summit in early April. Both factions of the MDC would be invited to present their visions for future action. If either MDC faction agreed to take the lead, the NCA would support their efforts. In the absence of MDC leadership on civil action, the NCA would take the lead itself.

¶3. (C) Madhuku said that most people blamed their problems on the government, giving MDC a natural following. However, the

MDC risked becoming irrelevant with both factions inward looking and focused on competing with each other rather than confronting the regime. The only engagement each faction had with the grassroots level at the moment was toward the end of getting support for itself instead of the other faction.

¶4. (C) Madhuku said that ZANU-PF, by contrast, was working hard to reach out to the grassroots. Joyce Mujuru was speaking out on the basic issues of food and education. Madhuku said some Zimbabweans equated her with a &good8 part of ZANU-PF, which they distinguished from bad elements that were to blame for the country,s woes. He said that in that regard Mujuru was having some success blaming corrupt bureaucrats, rather than the ZANU-PF leadership, for the country's failed state. The MDC had to do a better job of reinforcing the fact that ZANU-PF,s leaders were to blame.

Intra-Party Dynamics

¶5. (C) Madhuku said he did not think prospects for the MDC reuniting in the near future were very good. The NCA did not want to choose sides, although the organization might consider aligning itself with one faction if it seemed stronger. In that regard, he said Morgan Tsvangirai still had much more support at the grassroots level. By contrast, Madhuku said Mutambara was out of touch and had an &internet view of Zimbabwe8 built on his long years away from the country.

¶6. (C) Madhuku noted that the intra-ZANU-PF crackdown on Mnangagwa and his faction was continuing. However, Mnangagwa

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was not out of the succession game but was instead playing for time. Madhuku said one of Mnangagwa's people had confided to him that Mnangagwa had decided not to oppose Joyce Mujuru as Mugabe,s successor. However, Mnangagwa wanted the succession to happen as soon as possible and no later than 2008, with a presidential election scheduled for ¶2010.

¶7. (C) According to Madhuku, Mnangagwa,s plan was to let Mujuru inherit the many crises bedeviling the country in the expectation that she would not prove up to the task. Mnangagwa could then use the nation's economic distress to challenge and supplant her at the 2009 Party Congress in the run-up to the 2010 election. Madhuku added that he believed Mnangagwa would win an open competition with Mujuru for the party,s presidential nomination whenever it occurred.

International Community Should Remain Firm

¶8. (C) Madhuku said the international community had to maintain its pressure on the regime in order for there to be change in Zimbabwe. In that regard, civil society had been universally pleased with the IMF vote not to restore Zimbabwe's voting rights, which had sent a strong signal to the GOZ of its continuing isolation. A contrary result, he added, would have breathed life into regime hopes for international engagement on its terms.

¶9. (C) Madhuku noted that the NCA had no formal position on sanctions but that the organization would continue to draw international attention to the deterioration of rule-of-law that was the foundation of sanctions. He believed that increased civil action would force the regime to become more repressive and unpopular, thus inviting further international condemnation.

Madhuku,s Term Limit Busting

¶10. (C) Madhuku said the NCA was planning to conduct its congress this year in two stages. The first, an extraordinary congress in June, would amend the NCA constitution to change the term limits to allow certain NCA leaders to run again in NCA elections at the regular congress slated for October.

¶11. (C) Madhuku, one of the leaders bumping up against the existing term limits, said he realized that this would give ZANU-PF an opportunity to call the organization undemocratic, but to change key leaders at this point would cripple the organization. All of civil society, including the NCA, was having difficulty grooming future leaders. Promising young leaders were taking opportunities to leave the country and usually did not return.

Comment

¶12. (C) Madhuku is probably correct that the MDC splinters are too inwardly focused to confront the regime effectively in the near future. That said, both factions know they need to reconnect with the populace and feel pressure to do something soon. The civil society summit in April may stimulate action in that regard. It may also help stimulate some sort of working arrangement between the two factions to oppose the regime, with civil society serving as a facilitator. As to the succession struggle in ZANU-PF, the report of Mnangagwa,s plans has the ring of truth. The

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Mujuru faction probably also would prefer an early transition, given Solomon Mujuru,s ill health. It is possible that this could mean Mugabe,s retirement within the next 12-18 months, which would dramatically alter Zimbabwe,s political landscape.
SCHULTZ